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JACK ANDERSON

Police Groups Prepare to Fight Terrorism in '84

A number of intelligence reports warn that 1984 could be the year of the terrorists. Thousands of relentless assassins—professional terrorists trained and indoctrinated behind the Iron Curtain, fierce fanatics sworn to die for Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, right-wing killers belonging to death squads—will be stirring up bedlam around the world.

The United States won't be spared, intelligence sources say. The 1984 election and the Los Angeles Olympic Games, it is feared, will draw terrorists to this country. Presidential candidates and Olympic athletes could be in danger.

But there is some good news: U.S. lawmen will be ready and waiting. I asked my associate Tony Capaccio to check into the preparations. He found that the Secret Service and local law enforcement authorities are prepared for the worst.

Tomorrow, the Secret Service will officially start protecting all the presidential candidates. Because of threats against Jesse L. Jackson, he has been receiving protection since November. One of the supervisors assigned to his campaign is the man who set up the command center at George Washington University Hospital when President Reagan was shot in 1981.

The Secret Service will provide far more than a "human shield" to accompany each candidate. Hotels will be swept electronically; security arrangements at local hospitals will be checked; motorcade routes, including the quickest way to hospitals, will be scouted in advance; the whereabouts of potentially dangerous persons will be sought.

Planning for the February and March primaries began back in August, 1982, with the formation of a permanent Candidate-Nominee Protective Division. The cost: the Secret Service has asked Congress for $27 million.

Security experts give some of the reasons they believe the candidates will be safe:

• The long, unofficial presidential campaigning has given state and local police substantial time to refine their security techniques. One 20-year veteran of the political wars, now working for one of the Democratic candidates, expressed amazement at the improved quality of local protection. "I find it all the way down to the sheriff's department," he said.

• Since the 1980 campaign, about 8,950 state and local police officers have taken one-week courses to familiarize themselves with the Secret Service's protective methods.

• The Secret Service learned a lesson from the near-assassination of Reagan in March, 1981. According to Dr. Richard W. Kobetz, a top security expert, the lesson was: "Never take anything for granted. Expect the unexpected. Nothing is routine."

• Since last April, the FBI has notified the Secret Service whenever someone who is considered a potential threat to the president or a candidate is picked up. Most of these persons are in prisons or mental institutions, but about 125 are at liberty. Their names have been put in the National Crime Information Center computer; if one of these people is arrested on any charge, the Secret Service will be notified of his whereabouts. Within two hours of its activation, the computer system flagged one of the names.

• Recommendations by the House assassinations committee have been enacted into law by Congress. One important change expanded the use of "zones of protection" to include political candidates. Entire hotel floors, for example, can be closed off and intruders can be arrested, even though there may be no obvious physical threat to a protectee. Previously, the use of "zones of protection" had been limited to presidents, vice presidents and their families.

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